

Ref: <File Ref>
D<Corres No>

<Date>

<Name>
<Address>
<Suburb> <State> <Postcode>

<Dear >

Victorian Electoral Representation Review - Submission

Thank you for the opportunity for Moira Shire Council to share its observations and experiences as part of the current Victorian Electoral Representation Review stage 1 preliminary submission process.

We are of the view that the electoral review should give significant weight to the views of our communities and their desire for effective and affordable representation. For this reason, our submission focuses on council's practical experience and the importance we place on representing and governing for our entire shire.

Number of Councillors

Moira Shire Council comprises 9 councillors.

- This equates to a councillor for every 2787 voters.
- Moira Shire has one of the higher levels of representation per voter.

However, the practical challenges of Moira Shire's land area and population distribution should also be considered in determining the appropriate number of councillors.

- Moira Shire is one of the larger shires based on land area (more than 4,000km²)
- Moira does not include large areas of state or crown parks and reserves.
- Our current representation levels equate to approximately one councillor for every 450km² which is significantly larger area than many other LGAs but largely consistent with councils of similar area.
- Moira Shire's population is decentralised and focused around the four major towns of Nathalia, Numurkah, Cobram and Yarrawonga. Each town has unique character that reflects its history and natural features.

Moira Shire's land area creates practical challenges for councillors and their ability to participate in and be a part of the communities they serve.

Recommendation

Council is of the view that up to nine councillors supports effective connection with and representation of local communities and has also proven effective in supporting informed and timely decision making.

Council does not support an increase in the number of councillors.

Unsubdivided or wards

Moira Shire is currently unsubdivided. Moira Shire was created out of the amalgamation of five smaller shires and the localised focus is still very evident in the character of the towns and communities that make up the Shire. In undertaking the representation review, Moira Shire encourages the VEC to have regard to the following observations.

- The introduction of wards may create a disconnect between how a councillor is elected to office and the councillors' legislated duty to govern in the interests of the entire shire once in office - a councillor is not elected to represent a ward. Any introduction of wards would require significant education and awareness for local communities to ensure the elected role and whole of council duties of a councillor are understood.
- Moira Shire councillors are evenly distributed across the Shire. This suggests the current voting system is able to achieve effective representation across the many communities and interests.
- The current Council comprises a mix of town and rural representation. There is a risk that the introduction of wards would see each ward dominated by a larger town and in doing so would divide up and potentially dilute the legitimate representation of rural residents located outside the major towns.

Recommendation

Council is of the view that proposals to remain unsubdivided or to introduce wards should be informed by the views of Moira Shire voters. However, if wards are introduced there should be careful consideration of the education needs and unintended consequences that may be triggered by their structural design.

Council looks forward to the opportunity to discuss these proposals and observations in more detail with the VEC as the review process continues.

If you have any queries or wish to discuss this matter further, please contact me on (03) 5871 9222.

Yours sincerely

Councillor Libro Mustica
Mayor
Moira Shire Council

<enc>
cc <cc1>

